

RELATION OF

The most Remarkable Pro-
ceedings at the late

ASSIZES AT

Northampton.

Conteyning Truly and Fully,
The Tryals, Confessions, and Execution
Of a { Most *Mischievous* *Witch*,
{ *Notorious High-way-man*,
{ *Barbarous Murderess*.

The First being *Mary Forster*, who by witchcraft destroyed above 30
Sheep belonging to one *Joseph Weedon*, and afterwards burned to
the ground his Dwelling-house, and Two Large Barns, full of
Corn and Hay: To his Damage above 300*l*. With her Confes-
sion of the Fact, how, and why she did it: and asking him for-
giveness for the same. And a Wonderful Experiment of her D-
evilish Skill shewed in the Goal, after she was Condemned.

The Second a High-way-man, who had been 14 times in Goal, and
before his Death discovered several others.

The Third a Young Wench that Killed her Child, with the Strange
Means how the same was Discovered, and her Penitent Behaviour
at the Execution.

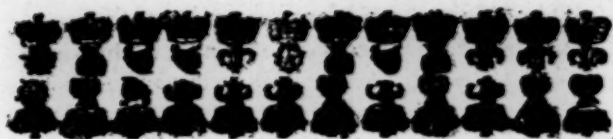
Who all suffered at *Northampton* aforesaid, *Saturday, Aug. 22. 1674.*

Printed for *Nathaniel Savidge*.

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*Gift of
Prof. G. L. Kittredge*



NEWS

FROM

Northampton Assizes;

OF

Witchcraft, Robbery on the Highway, and Murther, &c.

THe Assizes being holden at the Town of Northampton, for that County, on the 18th. of August, Instant, Amongst other Criminals there brought to their several Tryals, one Mary Forster was indicted for Witchcraft, and also for Fellony, upon the statute against burning of Houses, her case after a long debate, and full hearing of Evidence appeared to be thus.

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This Woman aged somewhat above fifty years, lately lived at a place called Estoar neer Fosters-booth in Northamptonshire, being Wife to an Honest poor Man there, by profession a Transhuor, or mender of Shooes; near unto her lived one Joseph Weedon, a Farmer of good ability or repute, being generally respected and beloved as well as most in the Countrey. It hapned that last Spring this Man keeping a considerable stock of Sheep several of them were drooping, and like to dye as 'tis supposed of the rot, but being willing to make what might be of them, he caus'd them to be killed in time, and several poor people for cheapness were very glad to be his Customers for his Mutton; amongst the rest this Gammer Forster came for a Quarter of it, but would give but Twelve-pence for that which he askt Fourteen-pence for, or he would not let her have that part which she desired, so that they did not agree, but she went muttering away, being heard to say these Words. You had been better let me have it, for you shall have more Mutton shortly lye upon your hands then you know what to do with.

And accordingly the next morning he found no less than seven of the best and soundest Sheep he had lying in a miserable condixion, with all their Leggs broken to pieres in several places, the next night more were served in the same manner, and the Night after that still more; so that in four or five nights space he had above thirty good Sheep thus strangely destroyed: Whereupon he was advlsd by some that suspected it to be done by Witch-craft, to take one of these Sheep
whose

whose bones were so broken, and shattered whilst it was alive, and burn, for that (according to their tradition) would make the Witch come to the place, that so they might know who was the Authour of the Mischief; this is most certain whilst the Sheep was burning, this Gammer Forster (though it is not known or believed she had any business there or that way) came up to the fire, and asked them what they were doing, which the remembrance of her former threatening words, confirming the Farmer in his suspicions of her, he (according to another old observation) endeavoured to draw blood of her by scratching her, but finding his nails not sharp enough for that service, he in his passion cut her over the hand with his knife, and thereby made a small wound, which for want of looking after in few days rankled, and she threatened to sue him for the damage; whereupon he agreed to give her twenty shillings, which she had no sooner received, but she boasted amongst the Neighbourhood, that it was the devil in her shape that received it of Vvedon, and that now she had thereby power to do him further mischief, which about two days after she put in Execution, one of his Barns which stood some distance from his House, and was full of Hay, being on a sudden set on fire, although there was no fire known to be near it before, but being timely discovered and the Neighbours called in was for the present quenched, but two days though it were kept watch by several persons, it was nobody could imagine how set on fire again and burnt down to the ground.

Some time after this he had another greater Barn nearer

nearer to his house, and full of Corn, set on fire several times, and put out as often, keeping above twenty persons continually to watch it, and fearing that his house might be set on fire suddenly to the danger of their lives, he removed with his Family to another House, and continued out of it above three weeks, during which time there was no firing or disturbance, so that he hoping the danger past returned, but the fourth day afterwards this great Barn was again set on fire so furiously that there was no stopping of it, but it caught hold of the dwelling house too, and burnt them down to the ground, with the most part of his Toe, the poor Mans damage above three hundred pounds, besides his disappointment of an Habitation, &c.

In the mean time this VVoman being violently suspected was several times examined before a Justice of the peace, but would at first confess nothing: however she was ordered to be searched by a Jury of Women, who affirmed that she had five several strange and unusual excrescencies which appeared exactly like a Sows Teats, and seemed to be usually suckt by something.

Being carried again before the Justice, after a long Examination she did confess, that she fired the aforesaid Barn, and being asked how, she replied that she lighted Touchwood, and the Devil carried her up by the Arms to the top of the Roof, and there with her Touchwood she set fire in the Thatch, she likewise did acknowledge that she destroyed his Sheep, and that she had several Confederates hereabouts, but refused to discover any of them. Hereupon she was committed

continued to Northampton Goal, where Mr. VVeldon
several times visited her, to whom she acknowledged
the injury she had done him, that it was in revenge not
only for refusing to let her have the Mutton, but for
denying her another thing another time, saying he had
none of it, however she desired his forgiveness, &c.

At her tryal she said little, but deny'd her being a
VVitch, yet seem'd to confess that she had done what
she stood charged with: whereupon, and on her former
confession she was condemned to be hanged, though
she most desired to be burnt, alledging that if she were
not, there would more prejudice happen to Mr. VVeldon,
who replied, that he pittied her condition, she
must suffer as the Law had ordered, and for his own
part he would put his trust in God, whom he hoped
would keep him against the malice of Hell.

After Sentence a Citizen of London being there
went out of curiosity to visit her as scarce believing any
such thing as VVitches in nature, after much discourse
he desir'd her to shew him some trick, or experiment of
her skill, which at last she condescended, bidding him
get a large Bason, but be sure not wet it, he going out
wets a bason on purpose, & wiping it dry again, brings
it, she gets in it standing upright, & after the muttering
a few unknown words, was carried several times round
the room, & at last up the chimney, but being about half
way up, the bason fell down, and she after it without
hurt, but scolded at the Gentleman for wetting it, say-
ing that otherwise she had got clear out of the chimney.

At the Place of Execution she would not speak a
word, save onely to desire that her hands might not
be Tied, and so she wretchedly finished her life.

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The Second that was executed, was a person that went by several Names, he had several Indictments against him, for Robing on the High-way, on which he was Convicted by evident Proof. He confest he had been Fourteen times in Goal, and after the Sentence upon Private Examination, 'tis said he discovered several other High-way-men. At his Death he seemed very penitent, and declared that what Confession he had before made in private, was true in all respects.

The Third was a Young VVench that being new come to a Service, one day as her Dame and she were washing a Buck, complained very much of her being ill, and the cupon went up into a Chamber to Lye down, where she was delivered of a Bastard Child, which she pretended was still Born, but however, the Law makes it Death in such case, to go about to conceal it, which she did by wraping it up in her Apron, and flinging it up over the Bedsteafter, which was not done so cunningly, but that she left the Apron strings hanging down, which her Dame afterwards coming up to see her, observing, and thinking it had been a fowle Apron accidentally escaped the VVash. pulled it down, and therein, to her great amazement, found the Murdered Infant.

This Girl seemed seriously to repent her of this abominable VVickedness, but vvhhen she came to the place of Execution, vvas not easily persuaded to forgive one *Lolomon* that vvas appointed for the Executioner, alledging a Vow that he had made to her, being before her fellow Prisoner, not to do it: but at last she vvas prevailed vwith, and did freely forgive him, and so suffered according to Sentence.

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